

Gasoline spills pollute drinking water source

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In the United States, we consume more than 450 billion gallons of water daily. This water comes from only two sources – surface water like rivers, lakes, and streams; or groundwater. Today, nearly 117 million people, more than one-half of the United States population, rely on groundwater for their source of drinking water. That percentage is even higher here in Britain. Groundwater is water that fills the cracks, pores, rocks and sediment beneath the surface of the Earth. Most groundwater is naturally pure and often remains undisturbed for years, even centuries before use. More than 90 percent of the world’s supply of potable drinking water is underground, and this is where the danger lies. Underground water is contaminated in vir-

tually every state across the U.S. Because we have not understood groundwater or its vulnerability, we have been extremely careless in protecting this valuable resource. Gasoline and other harmful liquids pollute our groundwater. Pollutants from poorly constructed landfills or septic systems are contributors also. Waters have also been polluted by runoff from highly fertilized fields and industrial areas, as well as acid rain. The over-use of herbicides and pesticides in and around the home account for more contamination to water than the farmer with large fields. Gasoline is also a problem. One gallon of gasoline can pollute 750,000 gallons of drinking water. Every little spill makes a difference. *(Editor’s note: Portions of this article were taken from, “Our Environment — What Can You Do,” published by the Center for Environmental Initiatives and Hands On Training)*

Environmental tips

Easy things you can and should do for your earth

- ❑ Turn water heaters down to 120 degrees Fahrenheit, and set the temperature of refrigerators between 38 and 42 F and freezers between 0 and 5 F. Clean the condenser coil on refrigerators at least once a year.
- ❑ A simple furnace tune-up can increase its heating efficiency by 5 percent, with a corresponding reduction in emissions. The 5 percent rise in efficiency means an annual savings of 8,000 cubic feet of gas.
- ❑ When buying appliances, look for a dishwasher with an air-dry setting; it can cut energy use by 50 percent. Use major appliances after 11 p.m. to avoid peak-usage periods.
- ❑ Look for washers with adjustable water levels and temperature. Look for a clothes dryer with a moisture sensor that turns the dryer off when the clothes are dry. This can cut energy use by 10 to 50 percent.
- ❑ Don’t over-dry clothes. A wooden clothes rack or clothes line is a practical and energy-saving device to dry clothes.
- ❑ Get to know your neighbors and start up a car pool. Tune-up cars, including the air conditioning unit. It will save money and the environment.
- ❑ Fit your house with the proper insulation, caulking and weather stripping. Added insulation will pay for itself in about two years.
- ❑ Plant a tree for the future generations. Shade trees can cool ambient air temperatures by 10 F and reduce local energy

- demand for air conditioning, as well as remove large quantities of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Mature trees consume an estimated 13 tons of carbon dioxide per year.
- ❑ Plant flowers and shrubs that attract wildlife and provide habitat and food. These include wildflowers, natural prairie grasses, native bushes and environmentally friendly lawns.
- ❑ Use manual gadgets instead of electrical. For example, use manual can openers, carving knives, toothbrushes and pencil sharpeners. Reduced dependency on electrical gadgets reduces the demand on our resources.
- ❑ Recycle your aluminum cans. In many areas, aluminum foil, pie plates, frozen food trays, window frames and siding may also be recycled.
- ❑ Buy beverages in refillable bottles or recyclable glass. Save your newspapers and recycle.
- ❑ Buy bulk food whenever possible and buy the largest possible packages of nonperishable. It is a great way to cut down on waste packaging and keep it out of the landfills.
- ❑ Choose reusable products. Avoid single-use items like disposable razors or lighters. Use a permanent or reusable coffee filter.
- ❑ Use cloth diapers rather than disposable diapers. They are ecologically sound and prices are competitive with disposable types. If you can’t switch completely, alternate between them.
- ❑ Use rechargeable batteries — they last longer and contrib-

- ute less to our hazardous waste problems.
- ❑ Use cloth bags when shopping or reuse paper, plastic bags, or boxes at the supermarket.
- ❑ When shopping, look for biodegradable soaps, shampoos, and laundry cleaners.
- ❑ Put a plastic bottle, a displacement bag, or toilet dam in toilet tanks. If the toilet is flushed on an average of eight times daily, it would save approximately 5,800 gallons a year.
- ❑ Buy a plunger — they are much safer and more economical than drain cleaners, which are toxic or corrosive. Use baking soda on brushes to clean toilet bowls. Pour a half cup of borax in the bowl and let stand for an hour to disinfect. Use baking soda to clean sinks and appliances too.
- ❑ Give up chemical pesticides — try some organic gardening or home remedies in their place. Try these.
 - Soap and water mixture will serve as an effective pesticide, especially for aphids. Mix a half cup of soap powder and eight cups of hot water or add some slivers of old hand soap.
 - A popular remedy for slugs and snails is the use of a saucer full of beer, set in a hollow in the ground, so the rim is level with the ground. Slugs will crawl in and die.
 - Bulbs may be protected when planting by putting a little cayenne pepper in a bag and shaking your bulbs in it before planting. It will keep cats from digging them up also.

Recycling drop-off points

RAF Lakenheath
Bldg. 422 and Bldg. 1140
Metal cans
Plastics
Newspapers and magazines
Paper
Cardboard and brown bags
Glass
Wood pallets
CD-ROM disks
Toner cartridges
Scrap metal
Aluminum cans

RAF Feltwell
Next to the school, Bldg. 43
Aluminum cans
Newspaper
Glass

Did you know?

- ❑ Americans receive almost 4 million tons of “junk” mail every year, and 44 percent of it is never opened or read.
- ❑ The junk mail Americans receive daily could produce enough energy to heat 250,000 homes for a day.
- ❑ Water heaters account for about 20 percent of all home energy usage. For every 10 degrees water heaters are turned down, people save 6 percent of the energy used.
- ❑ Refrigerators in the United States use power equal to 50 percent of all of the electricity generated by nuclear power plants.
- ❑ Spark ignitions, instead of a pilot light, can cut a stove’s gas consumption by 40 to 50 percent. Convection ovens with fans distribute heat more evenly, are more efficient and can cook 30 percent faster than standard models.
- ❑ For every gallon of gas a car uses, 20 pounds of carbon dioxide is produced. Carbon dioxide is the main “greenhouse effect” gas. A well-tuned car uses up to 9 percent less fuel than a poorly tuned car.
- ❑ American cars travel almost four billion miles a day and use more than 200 million gallons of gas. That means Americans drive over a trillion miles per year.
- ❑ If only 1 percent of the cars in America were not driven one day a week, about 96 million gallons of gasoline could be saved in a year.
- ❑ Leaky auto air conditioners are considered to be the single largest source of CFC emissions in the United States.
- ❑ Tropical rain forests make up only 2 percent of the Earth’s surface, but more than half of the world’s wild plant, animal and insect species live there. Tropical rain forests provide the Earth with 40 percent of its oxygen.
- ❑ If every commuter car carried one more passenger, we would save 600,000 gallons of gas and keep 12 million pounds of greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere each day.
- ❑ Making aluminum from recycled aluminum uses 95 percent less energy than making aluminum from scratch. The energy saved from one recycled can will operate a television set for three hours.
- ❑ If one-tenth of one percent of all Americans recycled one can a day, it would save up to 3.5 gallons of gasoline each day. In 1989, Americans used 80 billion aluminum cans and recycled a record 60 percent of them.
- ❑ Forty to 50 percent of all the trash we throw away is paper. The average worker throws away about 180 pounds of recyclable paper each year.
- ❑ It takes 17 trees to make one ton of paper. A single edition of the Sunday New York Times newspaper uses 75 thousand trees.
- ❑ Each ton of recycled paper saves three cubic yards of landfill space with the added savings of 380 gallons of oil. Every year, Americans throw away enough office paper to build a 12-foot-high wall from Los Angeles to New York.
- ❑ According to the Environmental Protection Agency, at least 74 pesticides have been found in ground water of 38 states. Homeowners use up to 10 times more toxic chemicals per acre than farmers.
- ❑ An estimated 50 million flea collars for pets are used and disposed of in landfills every year. Some of the pesticides on flea collars cause permanent nerve damage.
- ❑ Americans dump more than 21 million pounds of antifreeze and 350 million gallons of used motor oil into the environment every year. One quart of used motor oil can pollute 250,000 gallons of drinking water.
- ❑ Each time a toilet is flushed it uses five to seven gallons of water. 40 percent of the “pure” water you used in the home is flushed down the toilet.
- ❑ It takes up to 150 gallons of water to wash a car with a water hose. The average shower can use up to 35 gallons of water.